



# Symposium on Educational Excellence 2025

## PA faculty perspectives on holistic advising

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## Keywords

Faculty, Students, holistic advising, faculty-student relationships

## Abstract

**Background:** Academic advising has long been a powerful mechanism to support student success, persistence, and degree completion in many disciplines.<sup>1-2</sup> Multiple models for academic advising exist in PA education, relying on one or more faculty to meet with learners and connect them to institutional resources, measure academic performance, and identify any potential barriers to academic success.<sup>1</sup> There is evidence that positive student-faculty relationships support academic success,<sup>1</sup> and programs demand more of faculty to support students with increasing academic, social, and environmental challenges.<sup>3-4</sup> However, there is little exploration of the faculty perspective so this study explores the faculty experience of advising.

**Research Aims:** This qualitative study informed by phenomenology explores the experiences of PA faculty engaging in academic advising. The research has two primary aims defining holistic advising and identifying facilitators and barriers to advising.

**Methods:** Using the snowball sampling, 11 PA faculty from across the country were recruited to share their perspectives through semi-structured interviews.

Interviews were transcribed and then open-coded.<sup>5</sup> Researchers collaborated on coding and then combined codes to identify themes. Thick, rich descriptions of themes utilizing interview quotations will be presented.

**Findings/Results:** Themes that emerged from the research include barriers to advising, facilitators to advising, and concepts around holistic advising and standardization. The primary barriers to advising are time, lack of training or expertise, limitations of university resources or lack of access to university resources. The facilitators to advising include peer mentorship, connection to students, sense of purpose in developing future PAs, faculty experience and expertise, and institutional supports. There was a lack of standard definition of advising. Faculty defined advising differently and noted that colleagues performed advising differently. There was some discussion of standardization by program and the benefits and challenges.

With this understanding of the faculty experience of advising, the authors' next steps include the development of a coaching model and resources for faculty to support student perseverance and success especially with consideration for diversifying the healthcare workforce. Limitations of the study are related to the small number of participants. However, we believe the diverse institutions, regions, and experiences of the interviewees will make the findings useful for considering how to advise professional students in healthcare programs.

## Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Define holistic advising
- Recognize the barriers faculty experience in advising
- Understand the facilitators for faculty advising
- Review preliminary recommendations for faculty and institutions in holistic, equity-minded advising

## References

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